THE New Republic

New Unity in the Communist World

Richard Lowenthal

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Another Way of Looking at the Blackbird

An Essay on Wallace Stevens

By IRVING HOWE

NOVEMBER 4, 1957

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Washington Wire

Crisis of Confidence

WHAT YOU ARE seeing in Washington now is a double crisis of confidence in Eisenhower—over Sputnik, and over the economy. How serious the men around Eisenhower regard the crisis is evidenced by the fact that they are throwing in their strongest weapon, Eisenhower's personality. He announces that he will go to the nation in a series of first-hand television shows. (On the TV he won't be embarrassed by reporters' questions. In nine weeks he has omitted all but three of his "regular" Wednesday press conferences. He was terribly mauled by the press, October 9, when he said Sputnik hadn't increased his apprehensions "one iota." We think we have never seen a time when the Washington press corps so universally belittled a President privately, and some of it is getting into the papers.)

The economic problem goes much deeper for America than the warning signals recently flashed from the turbulent stock market. It is our estimate that the inflation phase is, for the time being, about over (the cost-of-living increase this past month was only one-tenth of one percent). But to achieve this the whole momentum of the nation's magnificent economy has been slowed down (while the Soviets' has of course continued to bound ahead).

Basically, we think, this is because Eisenhower is trying to make America wear a suit of clothes too small for it. At a time when population is increasing 3 million a year he is frightened by the taunt that a $72 billion budget is the "largest peacetime budget in history." Of course it is! —so is national income, national product, national population. Eisenhower's whole Administration has been an effort to squeeze the growing youth back into outgrown boyish clothes. The spectacle is ridiculous—and dangerous.

Here are two recent basic Administration economic decisions that the public is hardly yet aware of. In August the Treasury made fateful decision No. 1 based on a fiscal miscalculation. For the past three years it has asked, and got, permission from Congress to raise the lid of the $275 billion debt ceiling temporarily. Taxes come in seasonally in the first of the year and Congress has granted a seasonal lift in the ceiling to compensate for the lean months. But this August for the first time in four years the Administration didn't ask that concession. It thought its surplus would carry it through. Well, it was mistaken. Expenses and inflation rose faster than expected, particularly defense expenses. The armed forces were spending at the rate of $42 billion a year instead of $38 billion.

Then the Administration took fateful decision No. 2. Instead of calling Congress back into special session to confess the error and ask for a higher debt ceiling, the Administration decided to bull it through. That is what is happening now. It is trying to thrust the economy back into a smaller suit of clothes. The Administration promises, or at any rate hints, that cut-backs in defense research will be ended; but if money is restored on this sleeve it must be cut off some other part of the already too-tight garment.

Borrowing from Peter

MEANWHILE the Administration has adopted some of the most ignoble fiscal expedients ever seen in Washington. The rate of federal payment to private airplane manufacturers has been slowed down, forcing the companies to the banks to borrow working capital. Again the federal debt is being kept within the arbitrary limit by the preposterous device of letting US agencies like the Federal National Mortgage Association ("Fannie May") borrow from banks and thus relieve the hard-hit Treasury. Such borrowings are not technically included in the national debt. The interest Fanny May must pay is higher than what the Treasury would pay in bonds. This is a nice thing for the Wall Street banks; the cost ($5 million or so) comes out of you and me as taxpayers!

All this is only one aspect of the national economy. The signs of recession are becoming quite serious. The Federal Reserve Board has, we think, pushed the anti-inflation hard money brake down too far on a skidding road, and we are going to be lucky if we escape a spin. Europe is so tied to our prosperity that a slump in America would be really tragic. The "chins-up" statements of the Administration on Sputnik and on the economy, meanwhile, are dreadfully reminiscent of poor, dear Herbert Hoover in 1930.

When Are Unions News?

IT MAKES this reporter gag a bit to sit in the marble Senate caucus room at the Labor Rackets hearings and listen to representatives of some of America's big firms tell how they engaged in anti-union activities. They stooped to hiring a regular union-busting firm which did their dirty work for them, organizing fake "loyalty" groups, subsidizing dissidents and calling up wives and mothers to say their boys would be fired if they didn't behave. What a nest of disgusting maggots the whole crawling picture is, Dave and his type, lolling in wealth, using his Teamsters to break other unions' strikes and taking bought-at-wholesale gifts from management through the unholy firm of Shefferman and Co., and on the other side supposedly reputable firms like Continental Baking, Whirlpool Washer, Sears Roebuck and 300-odd others hiring Shefferman's Labor Relations Associates to keep workers docile and scared, or tied to poverty with so-called "sweetheart contracts."

In fairness to Sears, its pay is good and its welfare benefits substantial. But some Sears workers apparently prefer collective action to paternalism. By an odd coincidence the *Washington Evening Star* which gets a dozen pages of Sears advertising a week, played the story inside, though the transgressions of Dave Beck always made page one. Big advertiser Sears has some 200 outlets. Some class in journalism might make a comparative study of the local treatment of the two stories.

T.R.B.

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Solace or Security?

Democratic politicians rarely feel they can afford the luxury of telling the whole truth to the people. And since not telling it, though prudent, is uncomfortable, they find it easier if they themselves do not have to hear too often too much of the sour truth. The men under them who report and collect the news come to realize that it is safer to be wrong before it has become fashionable to be right.

—WALTER LIPPMANN, *The Public Philosophy*

IT MAY be that the President really thinks the situation is in hand. If that is the case, our only hope is that the consultants, and particularly those of his own party, who are becoming restive (and of whom the Vice President may be the weathervane) may persuade him to take a closer look. But it also may be that Mr. Eisenhower is not as content as he wants to appear to be. Possibly he realizes that Sputnik was a nasty blow to our national influence, and that the Soviet ICBM is an exceedingly uncomfortable augury for our future military security. If this is so, the President's comforting words must reflect his conviction that confidence is what is needed to bring forth the nation's best effort. (Did not the stock market, after all, rise by the incredible amount of $8.5 billion in a single day following the President's expression of "unshakable faith in the capacity of informed, free citizens to solve every problem involved"?)

Such an attitude on the part of a businessman's administration is not surprising: an atmosphere of confidence is what business always wants. And yet, this approach to our national security is now demonstrably dangerous. There is nothing novel in *The New Republic*'s saying this: we take heart, however, from its being said during the past 10 days by editors and columnists who have, heretofore, had nothing but kind words for the President. ("Come Off It, Ike, Who You Kidding?" asks the *Denver Post*, which endorsed Mr. Eisenhower in 1956.)

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A chart recording public concern over national security, if reduced to the form of a curve over time, would resemble the fever chart of a malarial patient. The most recent "low," from which we are still recovering, would coincide with the Summit meeting of July, 1955. Since that date, as the Khrushchev regime has progressively revealed its legitimacy as Stalin's successor, there has been a generally upward trend in public apprehension, marked by sudden spurts set off by crises in the Middle East, or, most particularly, the Hungarian revolt. By all rights Sputnik and the disclosure of Russian progress in the missile field should produce a new high fever, corresponding, say, to that which followed announcements that the Russians had built the A-bomb and the H-bomb. But Mr. Eisenhower's purpose has been to reduce public fever, to smoothe out the curve.

What the President ought now to consider is whether he is not in danger of maintaining a level of concern which is too low. Admittedly, hysteria is uncalled for, and one can applaud Mr. Eisenhower's view that the defense services can plan more soundly and intelligently if they are not faced

A Communication

► *Paths to Desegregation*

SIRS:

THE ARTICLE, "Paths to Desegregation," by my distinguished colleague, Professor Charles L. Black, Jr. (*NR*, October 21), embodies in my opinion a first-rate systematic analysis, without which no approach to effective judicial

(Continued on page 22)

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with violent oscillations in the amount of money Congress permits them to spend. But one cannot agree, in the light of growing nuclear strength of the Communist world and in the face of Russia's indisputable maturity in science and technology, that the US can safely go on as we have been going, allowing the juncture of a fixed budgetary ceiling and a persistent inflation actually to *reduce* our defense efforts.

On the record of past behavior, we as a nation will not respond adequately to a challenge as massive as that the Russians pose unless the public is more worried than it is. We must run scared because it is the only way we can put up a respectable race. And, let's face it, we have got also to be prepared to be a bit wasteful. For five years now the Administration has been after the "fat" in the defense establishment. To handle the reducing job, the Administration called in perhaps the ablest industrial manager the country has produced — Engine Charlie Wilson.

But now Mr. Wilson's day is done. And from his labors we should have learned that what some call "fat" in defense is a necessity. Chop persistently at the "fat" and before long you are carving muscle. The Army is giving up divisions, the Navy is mothballing ships, the Air Force is terminating construction programs—of planes and missiles—and research and development has been cut "across the board" (the easiest but least intelligent way in which to cut it). Many, perhaps most, of these cuts have resulted from the belief that in a world in which everything else is growing more expensive the national defense burden must not. The Administration began with the assumption that the health of the American economy is the nation's greatest strategic asset. It has sought to maintain that health at the expense of the defense establishment — initially, perhaps, a justifiable "calculated risk," but surely not one which we can take today. It should be noted too, because it is by no means irrelevant to our posture of strength, that this attempt to maintain the health of our economy has been made, as TRB points out this week in *Washington Wire*, even at the cost of curtailing its rate of growth.

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We are not here suggesting that the five-star General in the White House has disarmed us; by any familiar "peacetime" level, national defense expenditures are high. But the time for a radical reappraisal of the state of our national security is overdue—certainly it was due when the long-range radars stationed in Turkey proved that the Russians had achieved an operational intermediate range ballistic missile and had thus vastly increased the jeopardy to our allies and to our strategic air bases overseas.

If we are to respond to the Soviet challenge in a properly resolute and energetic manner, there must be a new spirit in Washington—and in the defense laboratories and plants around the country. Confidence must be allied to candor. Inter-service squabbling over budgetary pennies must give place to a buoyant determination to cut through difficulties to the central objectives. That was the spirit that enabled the Army Ballistic Missile Center to perfect our first operational military missiles, at a time when most of Washington thought of the missile age as still the province of amateur societies of potential inter-stellar travellers. And that was, of course, also the spirit that built the first Atomic bomb.

No, Virginia

A FULL YEAR before Governor Faubus of Arkansas displayed his vulgar talents, the Virginia Democratic machine exercised the dismal leadership in behalf of continued segregation to which its absolute ruler, Sen. Harry Flood Byrd, has dedicated it. At an extra session held in the late summer of 1956, the Virginia General Assembly passed a number of laws to implement Senator Byrd's objective of "massive resistance" to the courts.

These laws are ranged in depth, like the entrenchments of a city under siege, so as to provide successive lines of defense. They are one and all ridiculously disingenuous. A legal attacking force consisting of one law school sophomore and three freshmen could take them by storm in the course of a single charge. And indeed, shortly after its establishment, the first line of defense fell easily at the onslaught of a federal district judge implementing the Supreme Court's order for integration with all deliberate speed. The federal court of appeals for the Virginia circuit promptly upheld the district judge, and last week the Supreme Court declined to review the case, thus allowing the lower courts' rulings to stand.

The first line of defense which has thus failed its first test is a measure vesting in a single, centrally-controlled board the power to assign pupils to various schools. The criteria to be employed in making such assignments include the effect of "any disparity between the physical and mental ages" of a child "when contrasted with the average physical and mental ages of the group"; relevant matters indicating "a clear and present danger to the public peace and tranquility;" and, if you please, "the sociological, psychological, and like intangible social scientific factors as will prevent, as nearly as possible, a condition of socioeconomic class consciousness among the pupils."

With respect to the constitutionality of Virginia's Pupil Placement Act we have just described, it is for once true that to exclaim "To ask the question is to answer it" is not to beg the question. If there were any doubt,

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it is conclusively removed by the first section of one of the other statutes passed together with the Pupil Placement Act: That section declares that integration pursuant to the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States "would tend to disturb the peace and tranquility of the community."

Virginia's other legal redoubts (a redoubt is a "species of out-work or field-work, usually of a square or polygonal shape, and with little or no means of flanking defense"), by which Governor Stanley and his probable successor, Mr. Almond, propose to take their stand, are no less vulnerable. The plan is to close schools which have integrated—voluntarily or pursuant to court order—and to make tuition grants to children thus left without a public school to go to. These grants are to be employed in attending "private" schools under regulations to be promulgated by the Governor or the legislature; that is to say, segregated "private" schools. It may be confidently predicted that the Supreme Court would hold such schools to be public, state-controlled schools within the meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment, certainly if, as is likely, a very substantial number of the pupils in attendance are there by virtue of state grants.

Virginia's lawyers would be well-advised to look at a number of Supreme Court decisions, antedating the school segregation cases, which define the concept of state action under the Fourteenth Amendment. They will find that their prospects for success are dim indeed, unless they are willing to abandon completely and without subterfuge any function, even any interest or influence, on the part of the state and all its officials in the process of educating the young. (And what a fine patriotic thing such an abandonment would be, in the face of the immense and palpable educational strides the Russians have been making!) There are Southerners who threaten to retreat to such a last line of defense. But do they realize that it will mean condemning the children of all but the prosperous to illiteracy? Men who are engaged in opposing the inevitable will bluster and will stubbornly harbor illusions. We doubt that those who talk of closing the schools have really faced up to the consequences of such action.

Middle East Dispute

WHATEVER kind of international commission is finally set up by the United Nations to investigate conditions on the Turkish-Syrian frontier it is presumed that inquiry, unlike the one-man Richards mission to the Middle East sent out last August by Secretary Dulles, will produce a thorough and impartial survey of the facts.

It is further presumed that those facts will show

I'm Voting Republican

THE Assembly Hall of the Arlington high school was two-thirds empty when I arrived; the 12 chairs on the platform were begging for speakers; the photographs of the candidates in the November 5 state election in Virginia beamed down from all sides. One by one the tired figures rose and made their tired appeals.

The sixth speaker was Mr. A.E.S. Stephens (D), candidate for lieutenant governor of the Byrd Organization (which has run our state for 31 years) and therefore the lieutenant governor-to-be. Stephens is the "liberal" on the Byrd ticket this year—the man who is supposed to reconcile Northern Virginia to the worst excesses of the Organization in preparing to close down all our public schools in order to evade the Supreme Court's desegregation order. Conscious of his role, he began his address by reminding us that he had toured the state for Adlai Stevenson in '52 and '56. "I told 'em," he said, "I seen the handwriting on the wall." The Republican candidate for governor, Ted Dalton, was the Sputnik candidate. "By that I mean," said Stephens, "that he goes round in circles above the heads of the people, speaking only in code and repeating "beep, beep." This wrung a laugh from all of us, since there wasn't much to laugh at, and Dalton, who was waiting to speak, managed a sickly grin.

For the next 20 minutes Stephens had poor Ted Dalton thrusting bayonets into the backs of white school girls in Little Rock: The South had been raped for the second time; Dalton, Brownell and the Supreme Court were equally to blame. "This Court," he cried, "this Supreme Court, why, it's the very same court, my friends, that says it's just fine to be a Communist, just fine to try to overthrow our government, as long as you don't throw a bomb. The very same court," he added, "that took that poor American boy, against his will, mind you, and threw him to them Japanese wolves . . . them Japanese wolves, the most treacherous people alive."

At last he came to his peroration. "$50,000 a day it costs us to keep them nine little nigras in that white school in Little Rock!" he cried. "Good money we could have spent for defense. I'm telling you people if it weren't for them nine little nigras it would be our Sputnik up there tonight and not the Communists!"

Dalton seemed groggy as he rose to speak. It hardly mattered to me what he said. I can listen to a reasoned speech by a segregationist as patiently as the next man, but I'm enough of a snob to dislike being treated as a peasant. So I'm riding around with a large blue and red sign on my car saying *Ahead with Ted*. It's a strange feeling for someone who never thought of himself as anything but a Democrat for the past 30 years.

MICHAEL STRAIGHT

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that both sides have grossly exaggerated the dangers that threaten them, and that the report of the commission will have a soothing effect: Turkish maneuvers will draw to a close, the troops will disperse and the Syrian press will calm down. Indeed, the press has already begun to do so on urgent representations from Syria's acting foreign minister, Khalil Kallas. But the essential fact is that —to all present appearances—the Syrian Government will remain in power with its policies unchanged. In other words, the agreements with the Soviet Union for economic aid and arms supply will stand.

That essential fact will be interpreted by the Arabs as another resounding diplomatic defeat for the US. Without getting involved in chicken-and-egg arguments as to which came first, it may be said that the present crisis in the Middle East did not begin with the Soviet-Syrian agreements. It began with the strong reaction which those agreements provoked in our State Department, reactions that might well have been controlled with a little more foresight (and insight). The attitude taken by the Administration was regarded by the Syrians—and by the rest of the Arabs as well—as, at worst, an attempt to undermine the Syrian Government, or, at best, an effort to induce a change of policy. On neither count has success been achieved. Nor have we succeeded in using King Saud as an agent of US diplomacy.

Another result of the crisis—always assuming it will be solved or pigeon-holed peacefully—is that the Arabs will be confirmed in their neutralism. They have seen, at close quarters, an example of power-politics at their worst, and they were shocked and frightened at having got involved in an argument between our Strategic Air Command and the Soviet ICBM. As the Russians, for reasons of their own, have accepted Arab neutralism while the West still clings to the Eisenhower Doctrine. the advantage, at any rate in the short run, will lie with the Russians. Moreover, Arab and Russian propaganda has now convinced the Arab masses that there was an American-Turkish plot to attack Syria. The attack was never launched. Why? For the Arabs, excluding the more sophisticated elements, there can be only one answer, namely, the bullying and brow-beating of Mr. Khrushchev. The truth is that the Arabs dislike force very much when applied against themselves; but they respect it when applied against others. The apparent success of Mr. Khrushchev's threats will make a deep impression and serve to emphasize the lesson of Sputnik The fact that this impression rests on an illusion—that Turkey intended to attack Syria (which it obviously did not)—makes no difference. Truth does not govern men's actions; what men believe to be true does.

NO DATE IN THE DESERT

***The Syrian Government having declined King Saud's offer of mediation has asked him to withdraw it.*—News item, October 25th**

WHERE Saud's caravan has rested,
Flowers of peace should deck the grass,
But as his presence in Syria is definitely not requested,
None will find them when they pass,
Ah!

When Saud's caravan alighted
Jordan sped him on his way,
But as by Syria he was definitely not invited,
His flowers of peace must wait another day,
Ah!

When Saud's caravan was leaving,
They gave godspeed in the Lebanon,
But Syria is definitely and finally not receiving
Flowers they potted in the Pentagon,
Ah!

Still Saud's caravan proceeded,
Turks invited him to stay,
But Syria his progress definitely and absolutely impeded
And would prepare no caravanserai,
Ah!

Flowers of peace and mediation
On the desert Saud would cast,
But as Syria definitely and flatly refuses to send an invitation,
No flowers of peace will show where he has passed.

Desert wastes he might be strewing
With sweet blossoms from the West,
But as Syria repeats that there's definitely nothing doing
Saud's caravan can find no place to rest,
Ah! (Mafeesh!)

SAGITTARIUS

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Bevan—Where Are the Loves of Yesteryear?

THE Aneurin Bevan now visiting the United States is a rather different person from the man most Americans have come to feel is their inveterate enemy. Up to now it must often have seemed that he has taken good care to tread on every American corn. It is not only that he has so often been opposed to American foreign policy and has either ignored Russian aggression or been so polite in his rebukes that his words have read like a compliment. There is more to it than that. The mere thought of Mr. Bevan's fervent views on socialism has sent a shudder of apprehension through the heart of every true Republican. They can now go easy to bed. It is not accidental that Mr. Bevan on October 28 addressed the Economic Club of New York, and the Commerce and Industry Association the following day. While it may not be true that Mr. Bevan is a reformed character, the remarkable fact about English politics is that he has made his peace with the conventional, respectable leadership of the Labour Party. From now on Mr. Bevan is more likely to turn Right than Left.

And this is not because Mr. Bevan has undergone a sudden Pauline conversion. Something more Shakespearean has been happening. After havering and hovering, after arguing for one thing today and the opposite tomorrow, he has at last come down against most of his old playmates on the Left. At the Party's Annual Conference recently held at Brighton he was chiefly responsible for defeating their motion that Britain should no longer manufacture the hydrogen bomb.

It has been the most dramatic scene for years. Having up to now always been in the enviable position of being on the attack, Mr. Bevan was by no means at his happiest when trying to defend the official view. "You've sold the pass," a familiar voice shouted from the hall—bitter words for any man who, year after year, has been the darling of the rebels. As Mr. Bevan spoke, one's mind wandered to those scenes in the past when he used to storm up to the rostrum, determined to throw out the money changers from the Temple. Was this the face . . .? Was this the man who was once popularly supposed to own the Ark of the Covenant? Who had spent his whole life attacking what he called the right-wing policies of Ernest Bevin, Herbert Morrison and Hugh Gaitskell? And here he was at the Annual Conference, not only talking palpable nonsense—which was not the drama—but defending a policy that he was privately condemning only a few days before the delegates met.

The shock was almost more than some of them could bear. Coming down the stairs after the speech a devoted Bevanite clutched the present writer by the arm. Would

Keystone

Aneurin Bevan with party leader Hugh Gaitskell at the recent Labour Party conference.

I be an angel and stand her a drink? Deathly pale and swaying, it seemed at first that she had been overcome by the appalling heat in the balconies of the hall. But it was a spiritual, not a physical, collapse that had made her helpless. "I just can't believe it," she kept saying. Others talked as if they would not even stop at murder. "I'll carve him up if it's the last thing I do," one of them said.

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Both these reactions seem a little innocent; after all, politicians are politicians the whole world over. What is more, Mr. Bevan's appalled admirers should have been warned by certain infallible signs long before the Conference opened. During the last 12 months, for instance the Labour Party, as is its way, retired to Mount Sinai to concoct yet another commandment for the faithful. The result of these cogitations was one of the most confused and bewildering documents ever produced by a political party. "Industry and Society," as it is called, can be conveniently reduced to a single proposition: the next Labour Government, we are told, would buy shares in all the largest firms in Britain. Like so much that the Labour Party does these days, the paper was designed as a compromise between those who still believe in nationalization and those who regard it as old-fashioned fustian. Even before the document was published, both sides were busily putting their own particular slant on the new policy. The right-wing were whispering that it was a great triumph for Mr. Gaitskell; he had had his way and nationalization was no more than a bad old dream. The Left drew the opposite conclusion. "Industry and

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Society" meant that the next Labour Government would launch a massive and final attack on the Citadel of Capitalism.

The cynics were inclined to see the document in a very different light. If the Labour Party were to have a holding in every major British firm, there would presumably have to be State directors on the Boards. In that case there would be almost more jobs than boys. What pickings! No longer would the budding business tycoon have to serve a tiresome apprenticeship in industry. He would join the Trade Union Movement. Then skipping joyfully up the ladder—from Union official to membership of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress—he could expect to blossom out into top hat and morning coat with all the inevitability of a chrysalis hatching into a butterfly. Perhaps these gentlemen would afterwards write their autobiographies—"My Struggle." Even the present writer had hopes that he would not be forgotten. Goodness knows, he would not ask for much—a couple of chairmanships at $20,000 a year, a posse of obsequious cars—nothing more. The simple life as preached by the British Labour Party in 1957.

Ridiculous as all this seems, a very serious principle was involved. Whatever gloss the leadership might put on the document, the awkward conclusion is that if you buy shares in private firms you are, in fact, investing in the success of capitalism. This may, of course, be a very good thing. It may be that nationalization is both a clumsy device and no longer has much relevance to Britain's economic problems. But the merits of nationalization is not the important point. What matters is that if Labour is going to have an increasing stake in capitalist enterprise, how can it continue to call itself a Socialist Party? The Movement's official newspaper, as Mr. Shinwell comically suggested, would not be *The Daily Herald* but *The Financial Times*.

This fact sank in slowly; but it sank in nevertheless. After the usual reverent silence that greets all pronouncements from on high, some of the Bevanites let forth a clamor of criticism and despair. As a result of this both the Right and the Left began to leak what had really happened during the deliberations of the Executive. One astonishing fact emerged from these revelations. Mr. Bevan, for years the passionate advocate of nationalization, had not raised as much as a whisper of criticism.

That alone should surely have warned his admirers that something very odd was happening. There were other signs during the conference that were still easier to read. It was observed that Mr. Bevan, who thinks he is going to be Foreign Secretary in the next Labour Government, was a trifle cool when he happened to bump into some of his former associates. No doubt he found their minds a little parochial; his own was lost in contemplation of vaster issues. Even more revealing was his ostentatious friendliness toward Mr. Gaitskell. For years these two have been fighting it out for the leadership of the party and at one time it seemed that they would tear the movement apart. Mr. Bevan has called Mr. Gaitskell "a desiccated adding machine" and Mr. Gaitskell has made it clear that he thinks Mr. Bevan is an irresponsible demagogue. But not at the last annual conference. The course of true love is always touching, especially when two predestined souls have taken so long to recognize one another. All the same one could not help noticing through one's tears of joy that this billing and cooing was not to the liking of the Bevanites.

There are those who think that Mr. Bevan's change of heart will not last. He may, they admit, be a good boy until Labour is returned to power, even though his instincts will forever be crying out for a new rebellious outburst. There will be a very different story, they argue, if he goes to the Foreign Office and then finds that it is not quite so easy to solve the world's problems as he thought before he went there. Mr. Bevan, they think, will promptly look round for an opportunity to contract out. He will turn up some excuse for resigning and once again pose as the champion of the Left.

This is surely to misunderstand the political significance of Mr. Bevan's speech at the Annual Conference. Mr. Bevan has temporarily destroyed the Left in Britain—that is the point. Up to a week or so ago he was regarded by some humble and sincere people as a man who could do no wrong; as a man who was not as other politicians. Because of this they were not only eager to work selflessly for him but were prepared to risk their chances of advancement, and even their jobs, for his sake. But not now. Indeed, as we look back objectively on British politics during the last decade, we can see that Mr. Bevan has always seen the Left as a personal bodyguard. He has flattered it with illusions, half truths, and words. For years there has not been a coherent policy on the Left, partly because Mr. Bevan has always been too lazy to get down to it but mainly because, though only in his subconscious perhaps, he has thought of the Left in terms of personal devotion to himself.

For this reason it looks as if there will be no army to greet him if he storms out of the Cabinet room one fine day and tries to raise the flag of rebellion. In fact the irony of the present situation is that he may not even become Foreign Secretary if Labour wins the next election. When Mr. Bevan was the unchallenged leader of the Left he was so formidable an opponent that he could have demanded almost any position he cared to name. He is now like Samson shorn of his locks. He has nothing more to give and so, if Mr. Gaitskell pleases, he can be dropped overboard, even on the brightest night, without any fear that he could split the Party. Mr. Gaitskell is quite tough enough to do just that if Mr. Bevan should become a nuisance.

HUGH MASSINGHAM

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New Unity in the Communist World

ONE year after the Polish "Declaration of Independence," which started the most profound crisis yet within the Soviet bloc and the international Communist movement, Communist unity shows a remarkable degree of consolidation.

The outspoken and often bitter public polemics, which during last winter and spring were so frequent between the heretical Communists of Poland and Yugoslavia and the orthodox camp led by the Soviet Union, have stopped completely.

The Yugoslavs, while safeguarding their sovereign independence, have in fact abandoned their former "non-aligned" attitude in favor of a return to "proletarian internationalism," *i.e.*, to full support for the foreign policies of the Soviet bloc, of which their recognition of the East German puppet regime is the latest example. The Polish Communists, who had always to practice such solidarity as a condition of maintaining their independence in domestic affairs, are making serious efforts to restrict the freedom of political discussion and to restore the "monolithic" character of their party.

This success of Mr. Khrushchev's in restoring a measure of Communist unity has been achieved in part by renouncing complete uniformity, and by granting to all Communist parties and governments a considerable degree of tactical independence. Clearly Gomulka and Tito are not going to abandon their concessions to the private peasants or their workers' councils, and Khrushchev is not pressing them to do so; but neither is he urging the "orthodox" satellite leaders, like Novotny in Czechoslovakia or Ulbricht in Eastern Germany, to follow their model. He has abandoned the "Stalinist" opposition in Poland, but made no move to get rid of the "old Stalinists" abroad after his victory over Molotov and his associates at home; instead, he has made it clear that he will back any Communist leader who proves strong enough to keep his party or government together—provided that he complies with three conditions.

These are that they must loyally accept Mr. Khrushchev's position; that they must support the foreign policy of the Soviet Union ("proletarian internationalism"); and that they must maintain (or seek to restore or achieve) monolithic single-party rule and defend its necessity against all "revisionist" attempts to defend the right of political criticism and organized opposition either inside or outside the party. On this basis, mutual toleration of "different roads to socialism," *i.e.*, of tactical variations both concerning the way to get power (as between the French and Italian Communists) and the way to exercise it (as between Poles and Czechs) has been established.

The new model of inter-Communist relations largely corresponds to the hopes originally entertained by Mr. Khrushchev at the time of his Belgrade visit in 1955 and of the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party early last year; it also corresponds to the ideas outlined by him, after his domestic victory last summer, in his famous "indiscreet" speech in Prague, when he bluntly told Tito that he could keep his workers' councils so long as he treated them as an institutional detail and not as a symbol of a different ideology. The remarkable thing is that Khrushchev has stuck to this concept of a more flexible form of Communist unity despite the shattering events of last autumn, and that he has succeeded first in enlisting for it the support of the Chinese Communists, and finally in getting it accepted by both Tito and Gomulka.

In Poland, where the foreign policy alignment was always secure for geographical reasons, this acceptance involves chiefly the campaign against "revisionism" and the difficult effort to restore monolithic party rule —an effort that is still being pursued by comparatively gentle, non-terrorist methods.

In Yugoslavia it has involved both a reorientation in foreign affairs and a unilateral ideological disarmament. The claim that the "workers' councils" are essential for true socialism as distinct from "bureaucratic state capitalism" has been suddenly and completely dropped because it implies criticism of the Soviet system; the doctrine that advanced democratic countries may achieve socialism by "reformist" methods and that the Communist bloc has no monopoly of socialist progress has been attenuated—in the last Tito-Gomulka communiqué—to the innocuous statement that in the West, too, the masses are "struggling for socialism."

THERE can be no doubt that President Tito and his closest advisers were profoundly frightened by the Hungarian revolution, because it showed that an effort to reform a Communist regime might easily lead to the total overthrow of Communist rule; and while probably none of the Yugoslav leaders believes that the Western Powers "organized" that movement, they are as worried as Mr. Khrushchev by the continued refusal of the West to accept the unpopular satellite regimes of Eastern Europe as permanent.

It is the conviction that a threat to any Communist dictatorship is a threat to all—that they must hang together if they do not wish to hang separately—that has caused both Tito and Gomulka to accept Mr. Khrushchev's terms for a new alignment, and has allowed the latter to that extent to pluck a tactical success from the very shock of his Hungarian defeat.

RICHARD LOWENTHAL

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The Russian Revolution — 40 Years Later

The Illusions that Were And the Illusions that Are

by GUS TYLER

NOVEMBER 7, 1957 (October 25 by the old Russian calendar), marks the 40th Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, or, as the Communists say, the October Revolution—the real revolution—thus distinguishing it from the February Revolution—the false revolution. For the latter, according to the Communists, was just a transfer of power from one ruling class to another, from feudal lord to bourgeoisie, while the former put power in the hands of the proletariat, the destined creator of the classless society.

But if change—sudden change—equals revolution, then the Russians have been in nearly a constant state of revolution. The War Communism of the first years with its draconic assault on private property was put aside in favor of the New Economic Policy with its encouragement of the Nepman, which just as abruptly gave way in the first of many Five Year plans to the extirpation of the Kulak. Worldwide agitation for collective security against fascism turned into mutual aggression with fascism only to reverse itself and become a war against fascism. These and similar *volte faces* would be less surprising in a society where intense class and political conflicts force changes in the ruling authority. But in the Soviet Union, all this and more has happened while one party with one clearly defined social goal has been in continuous power since 1917!

And yet, the more the Soviet Union has been the same thing, the more it has changed. The longer the Communist Party has been in power, the more Soviet

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society has transformed itself into the opposite of what it originally hoped to be. The party of social protest ends social protest; the instrument to end exploitation becomes the instrument of exploitation. Why, then, has "October" for so long fascinated so many, especially so many in the West who were of demonstrable good will?

To Hearst in 1918, the Revolution was a justified poke delivered by the little guy at the snout of the Czarist bully: "What are the Bolsheviki? They are the representatives of the most democratic government in Europe . . . the truest democracy in the world today" (March 1, 1918). To Lincoln Steffens, with the stench of capitalist corruption and money-grubbing in his nostrils, the Soviet Union was "the future, and it works." To Will Irwin, writing in *The Nation* in 1924, Russia was "settling back from her Bolshevik jag to a more or less orderly socialized republic." To Chiang Kai-shek, the Soviet Union was an ally in the unification and liberation of China. To Churchill, although the Kremlin was "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma," it had an over-riding concern for Russian "national interest" that would make it an acceptable colleague in pursuit of Atlantic Charter aims. To American Ambassador Joseph Davies, as interpreted by Hollywood, the cannibalism of the Soviet purge trials was a brilliant defensive maneuver against fascism. To Henry Wallace, the USSR was a slightly brutalized Russian version of the age of the common man.

And, finally, Dwight D. Eisenhower's confession this year:

> I was hard put to it when he [General Zhukov] insisted that their system appealed to the idealistic and we completely to the materialistic. And I had a very tough time defending our position, because he [Zhukov] said, "You tell a person he can do as he pleases, he can act as he pleases, he can do anything. Everything that is selfish in man you appeal to him and we tell him he must sacrifice for the state."

Mr. Eisenhower was apparently both fascinated and frustrated by Zhukov's version of the "team" approach.

IN ANY classification of the illusions that have proliferated around the Soviet Union, the Grand Illusion which deserves first consideration is the belief that by one revolutionary act, man can end oppression. " 'Tis the *final* conflict," sings the *Internationale*, "let each stand in his place. The International Soviet ['party' in the Socialist version] shall be the human race."

The roots of this illusion are deep. They lead us back to the Judeo-Christian prophecy of the Kingdom Come. They take us back also to the more modern assumption of man's capacity wholly to master his environment. One source of the illusion is ethical in character, the other scientific. Neither originates with Marx.

From the Congress of Vienna to Bosnia-Herzegovina, for a hundred years confidence grew that progress was assured. Expectations were fed by many streams: comparative peace in Europe after Waterloo, the unification and increasing democratization of the Western nations, the rise of trade unions and Social Democratic parties, the new status of womanhood, the assault on illiteracy, the theories of evolution advanced by Darwin and even more excitingly by Lamarck, the multiplication of man- and horsepower through steam and then electricity, and by the basic certainty that, as Lord Macauley wrote a century ago, "in every experimental science there is a tendency towards perfection. In every human being there is a tendency to ameliorate his condition." In the Marxist lexicon, this meant the inevitability of socialism. Thus, when Lenin seized power in 1917, Marxist critics quarreled with his method, but not with the millenial character of October: the debate was technical, involving time, place and instruments. Also, to both the millenial and scientific-minded, complicated discourses about the right and wrong "road to power" seemed an endless bore in face of the incontrovertible fact: Soviet existence. Some of Lenin's worst critics were won over by the *fact* of the revolution's control of one-sixth of the earth's surface. In 1904, Trotsky had predicted the end product of Leninism: "In Lenin's scheme," he wrote, "the party takes the place of the working class. The party organization displaces the party. The Central Committee displaces the party organization, and finally the Dictator displaces the Central Committee." But by October, 1917, Trotsky stood at Lenin's side and within a few months Trotsky was penning his *In Defense of Terrorism*. On the very day of Bolshevik victory, five members of Lenin's Central Committee resigned in protest against the October Revolution: "We cannot accept the responsibility for the disastrous policy of the Central Committee," declared Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Miliutin and Nogin,

> carried on against the will of an enormous majority of the proletariat and soldiers, who are eager to see the rapid end of the bloodshed between the different political parties of the democracy. . . . We leave the Central Committee at the moment of victory; we cannot calmly look on while the policy of the chiefs of the Central Committee leads toward the loss of the fruits of victory and the *crushing* of the proletariat.

But within weeks, these protestants were occupying the party's highest posts, exhorting workers everywhere to follow the example of October.

The October Revolution did more, however, than reinforce the millenialism of recent times; it solved the problem of "the transition." How does mankind pull itself up by its own bootstraps? October had its answer: Change the environment. "There is no country," reported John Dewey in *The New Republic* in 1928, "unless it be possibly Mexico, where the esthetic aim and quality so dominates all things educational as in Russia today," and

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Lincoln Steffens

he spoke of "the marvelous development of progressive educational ideas and practices under the fostering care of the Bolshevist government."

This "dictatorship," let us not forget, was to be only transitional, useless and harmful once the owning class had been liquidated. Then, indeed, all force used by one social group against another would not only be unnecessary but impossible; the state would wither away; the "Kingdom of Freedom" prophesied by Marx would have arrived.

Four decades later, simply to restate the theory of proletarian dictatorship and the withering away of the state is to invite ridicule from the politically literate. And yet, what power over men's minds the illusion has had! Moral man, in his search for the millenium, found in the proletariat the "scientific" end of his quest. Marxist theory, as Reinhold Niebuhr put it, said there was an "ideological taint to the moral and social ideals of every group except the proletariat." The proletariat is the *one* group in "human society free of sin," selected by history as the chosen people; by instinct, the proletariat would ultimately complete its mission and save mankind.

How close this portrait of the proletariat is to reality we cannot—even four decades later—discover from the October Revolution, for the simple reason that the Soviets themselves could not resolve what should have been a much simpler question: who is the proletariat? Forty years ago Lenin answered that he, through his party, was the proletariat, despite the fact that his revolution was led more by intellectuals than factory or field workers and was directed not against the Czar but against other parties of the "toiling masses": Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, Constitutional Democrats. The question haunted the victors. In 1920 the people of Kronstadt wanted to know whether the proletariat was the Soviet or the party. The voice of Lenin and the hand of Trotsky handed down the bloody answer. When Lenin died the question was open as to whether Stalin, Trotsky, Bukharin or all three were "the proletariat." It was answered by Stalin in the style of October. And when Stalin died, the question again plagued the epigones who, whatever their disagreements, agreed that Stalin had *not* been "the proletariat." At the moment, "the proletariat" is Khrushchev. And tomorrow?

Today, one who was once a Communist hero and now writes from a Communist jail speaks of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the new class. "In contrast to earlier revolutions," writes Milovan Djilas in *The New Class*,

> the Communist revolution, conducted in the name of doing away with classes, has resulted in the most complete authority of any single new class. Everything else is sham and illusion.

But Djilas' "discovery" was anticipated long ago. Writing in 1904, Plekhanov charged Lenin with "confusing the dictatorship of the proletariat with the dictatorship over the proletariat." Martov assailed Lenin for trying to establish "martial law" in the Russian Social Democracy. Zasulich charged that Lenin's idea of the Party was Louis XIV's idea of the state. Finally Rosa Luxembourg back in 1918 spelled out the reason why the dictatorship *of* must become the dictatorship *over*:

> The only way to a rebirth is the school of public life itself, the most unlimited, the broadest democracy. It is rule by terror which demoralizes. . . . Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously—at bottom, then, a clique affair—a dictatorship to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat, however, but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians.

October, moreover, had another appeal to a war-sickened world: was not Communism the true internationalism? Most of the Socialist Parties of the West had rallied to the colors of their respective countries in World War I, and when the war was over each had blood on its banner. The Russian Bolsheviks, on the contrary, not only had opposed the war but had successfully converted the "imperialist war into a civil war," and had established what was intended to become a world-circling international Soviet, a commonwealth of cooperative commonwealths.

For many years—almost up to the present—it was widely believed that, whatever the faults of the Soviet Union, it was dedicated to true internationalism, national autonomy and cultural equality. "Soviet theory and practice," wrote Corliss Lamont in the early 1950's,

> uphold the right of all racial and national groups to freedom and equality. The Soviet people are perfectly clear that without full ethnic democracy no country containing substantial minorities can be considered truly democratic. To paraphrase the American Declaration of Independence, the Soviets take the stand that not only all individuals, but also all *nations* are created equal, that they are endowed—with certain inalienable rights. That among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

This paraphrase is painful to read today—after Hungary. But actually the words were a mockery—or shall we say another illusion—even when they were written.

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On the heels of October, the Bolsheviks forced Georgia into the Soviet Union against its will. When, at a conference of Socialist leaders—the Second, the Second-and-a-Half and the Third Internationals—the Russians were asked to explain this act of suppression, the shrewd and cynical Radek replied that perhaps others could run industry on the hot air of their speeches but that the Bolsheviks needed Georgian fuel. During the Stalin period —from 1924 to his death three decades later—the organized genocide of recalcitrant minority nationalities became standard operating procedure, described thus by a sympathetic observer of the Soviet Union, Frederick L. Schuman in his *Russia Since 1917:*

> In practice Soviet "federalism" has been, from beginning to end, a pretense. Repeatedly over the years boundaries have been changed [*e.g.*, the transfer of the Crimea from the RSFSR to the Ukraine in February, 1954, and the absorption of the Karelo-Finnish SSR into the RSFSR in July, 1956], the division of powers has been altered, and whole populations have been uprooted not through any "federal" procedure of decision-making but by Joint Decrees of the Union Sovnarkom, or Council of Ministers, and the Central Committee of the Party. In his indictment of Stalin, Khrushchev noted indignantly that in 1943-4, on the order of the Vozhd, all the people of the Karachai AR, and of the Kalmyk, Chechen-Inguss, and Kabardino-Balkar AR were deported to Asia, along with the inhabitants of the Crimean Tartar and Volga German ASSR's, both unmentioned by Khrushchev.

Khrushchev added that "the Ukrainians avoided meeting this fate only because there were too many of them and there was no place to which to deport them." Post-Khrushchev revelations record the forcible extermination of Yiddish culture in the USSR.

But to millions, these occurrences plus the Soviet denial of "inalienable rights" to Poles, East Germans, Latvians, Lithuanians, Esthonians, Rumanians, Bulgarians, and Czechs could not shake the illusion, which was —again to quote Lamont—the Soviet theory that

> the fundamental roots of national and racial prejudice and persecution are economic. When these roots have been eradicated through the abolition of poverty, depression and unemployment, so that different people do not fear one another as economic competitors, then the traditional hatreds and antagonisms tend to die out.

That was the theory, and when it was challenged by reality, the reality was called an invention of the bourgeoisie.

To these Grand Illusions we must add the illusion of the Central Truth, the discovery of which gives one knowledge of *all* truth—economic, political, ethnic, cultural, artistic, military and biologic. Isaiah Berlin, who is responsible for the phrase "the central truth," defines it as

> the belief that all problems are interconnected, and that there is some single system in terms of which they are all in principle soluble; moreover, that the discovery of this system is the beginning and end of morality, social life, education; and that to abandon the search for it in order to concentrate upon isolated or personal ends, say, the pursuit of knowledge, or artistic creation, or happiness, or individual freedom for their own sakes, is willful, subjective, irrational, egoistic, an immoral evasion of human responsibility.

According to this doctrine, there "is one truth and one only, which the whole of one's life should be made to serve . . . and one body of experts alone qualified to discover and interpret it."

Although inherentiy totalitarian, this view has over the last four decades had the allegiance of greatly-talented persons who, in their own opinion at least, are enemies of totalitarianism. To the spiritually dispossessed—perhaps even more than to the physically oppressed—the Prophet with the light of The Truth becomes a necessity; and although the substance of the religion He preaches is important, it is less important than the fact that there *is* a Prophet who gives more than economic security, more than literary and musical and artistic standards, more than philosophic absolutes: He offers forgiveness of all sins but one—disloyalty to the Party and its rulers. Was it not precisely this which made it possible for millions of people in Germany to swing their loyalty from Stalin to Hitler—and back again within two decades? This, needless to say, is not how the faithful see themselves or their leaders. Many Communists and fellow-travellers appear to themselves as rebels, dissenters, free-thinkers. The image of self-enslaved devotees of the Vozhd would come as a shock. They choose Communism because they love freedom; yet at the very moment of that choice, they not only lose their freedom but lend themselves to the enslavement of others. This is the ultimate irony of the Revolution: it is not the light that fails but the light that blinds.

But there are also the more minor and less permanent illusions, such as the notion that "all power to the Soviets" meant grass-roots democracy—direct administration by workers and peasants and soldiers of their own affairs through their own councils. Lenin described it as the "substitution of a universal popular militia for the police," of the "electiveness and recall at any moment of all functionaries and commanding ranks," of

> workers' control in its primitive sense, direct participation of the people at the courts, not only in the shape of a jury but also by the suppression of specializing prosecutors and defense counsels and by the vote of all present on the question of guilt.

Today, four decades later, the Soviet appears as a brief

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instrument of transition, a means for transferring power from the democratically elected Constituent Assembly of February, 1917, to the bureaucratically operated Communist Party.

Then too there is the captivating illusion popular for a time among Western progressives that intelligence and human engineering had come into their own with the Five Year Plan. Since the first of these plans coincided with the great depression of 1929, the chant went up: In America, there is "poverty amidst plenty," but in Russia they have a *plan*. And "planning" did not mean Keynesianism but Stalinism. While the capitalist countries were reporting disastrous drops in production, the Soviet Union's statistics skyrocketed. Millions in the West, starved of hope and goods by the Great Depression, watched the Soviets with awe and admiration.

Soviet statistics, however, dealt less with people (or pigs) and more with coal and iron. All news of the human famine that swept the countryside of this agricultural nation at the end of the 20's was suppressed by the Kremlin. The Soviets spoke only about the loss of horses, from 30 to 15 million; of horned cattle, from 70 to 38 million; of sheep and goats, from 147 to 50 million; of hogs, from 20 to 12 million. "Soviet rural economy," reports Schuman, "had not recovered from this staggering loss by 1941." And the loss of cattle was picayune alongside the loss in people. But, as Schuman adds, "the Party appeared less disturbed by dead kulaks than by dead cows. The former were class enemies."

Sidney Webb

History may be able some day to tell us whether the Five Year Plan was primarily an economic or political project. To Stalin, it was in the first place a war on the kulaks, who were multiplying rapidly and becoming (at least in Stalin's paranoiac mind) a potentially independent political force. The five-year plans were a second counter-revolution, and the peasants were not the only victims: It was the period for wiping out the last vestiges of trade union independence. It was also the period in which Stalin consolidated his power in the Party, first against the left-opposition of Trotsky and then against the right-opposition of Bukharin.

As Five Year Plan succeeded Five Year Plan and even the most ardent began to weary of this forced march, the Soviets invented a new myth: the democratic constitution of 1936. Sidney and Beatrice Webb made a personal and extended study of the Soviet Union just to make sure the words of the constitution were not misleading, and in their *The Truth About Soviet Russia* (1942) they ask two questions and give two answers:

1. "Is Stalin a dictator?" To which they answer, "Stalin is not a dictator."

2. "Is the USSR a political democracy?" To which they answer, "the USSR is the most inclusive and equalized democracy in the world."

What in the Webbs' training or temperament would allow them to think that a great nation would promulgate a constitution, elect the stipulated representative bodies, and then proceed to legislate by Party decree and enforce them through the secret police? The illusion of the "constitutional government" which arose in the '30's persisted through the great purges in which nine million persons are estimated to have been arrested. The illusion persisted while Yagoda—the prosecutor of Zinoviev and Kamenev—was purged by Yezhov, who was purged by Vishinsky. It was put to rest finally when Khrushchev told the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party that in fact *Stalin* had been for all those years the Constitution.

If, however, the October Revolution has made misty-eyed fools of so many devotees, it has also deceived many of its detractors. There have been those, particularly in America, to whom the October Revolution was just a conspiratorial act, or a passing political accident and a long-range economic impossibility. For two full decades, the United States refused to grant official recognition, and there was a time when some of the Western powers felt that a couple of well-equipped regiments, with the aid of some Czarist guerrillas, could topple the Bolsheviks; sharp investors bought up Czarist rubles while they waited for the dawn of an old day.

The illusion that world Communism is purely a conspiracy of evil men was essentially Joe McCarthy's view. It is an illusion not easily shaken because it is partially true. But the conspiracy is in the service of a worldwide non-deistic religion. And the religion is partly rooted in deep human aspirations. And for that reason the attempt to eradicate the October Revolution and world Communism by police methods alone had to and still must fail.

This mistaken view of the passing conspiracy bred lesser illusions. One such was the awaited return of Russia to capitalism. In 1921, Lenin launched his New Economic Policy (NEP), in an effort to boost the production of consumer goods by encouraging a sector of free enterprise in the economy. In the West there were some self-satisfied smiles at this apparent proof that even Bolsheviks realize there is no way to run an economy

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except through private enterprise. Unfortunately, however, the truth was that the Bolsheviks had undertaken the NEP as a temporary expedient to relieve the demand for some consumer goods. They dared make this concession because, by 1921, they had effectively crushed all political opposition: Social Democrats, Social Revolutionaries, Anarchists, Constitutional Democrats and Workers' Opposition. The NEP was a momentary retreat permissible only because of the regime's political strength.

The first Five Year Plan, with its agricultural debacle and its severe cut-back in consumer goods, stirred new illusions of impending collapse. Angry, hungry peasants and proletarians were envisioned as rising—either in political revolt or in economic sabotage—to sweep aside the brutal conspirators on top. But those who so confidently waited for catastrophe sadly under-estimated the power of the regime to induce or compel sacrifice for forced industrialization. By 1938, a decade after the first Five Year Plan, the Soviets proved their capacity to produce. "If the estimated volume of total industrial production in 1913 be taken as 100," calculates Schuman, "the corresponding indices for 1938 are 93.2 for France; 113.3 for England; 120 for the United States; 131.6 for Germany; and 908.8 for the Soviet Union."

From 1924 until 1944—from the death of Lenin to the death of Hitler—some were sure the October Revolution had lost its evangelical verve. Stalin was only interested in "socialism in one country." The big Communist push after World War II proved, however, that Stalin should have been taken at his word in his polemic against Trotsky when he insisted that "building socialism in one country" was only a half-way house in the long journey to the world revolution.

After the death of Lenin there was the illusion that this dictatorship built around one man could not survive his death. Yet, after a brief period of rule by the troika, a Stalin emerged—more powerful than Lenin. And after Stalin's death, it was again said that dictatorship had no built-in way of handling the problem of succession, and so it must fall. Then, when "collective leadership" was proclaimed, the Administration in Washington hastily claimed credit for having forced a softening of the regime. And when *kollectivnost*, after a brief time, was replaced with Khrushchev, the Administration—speaking through Mr. Eisenhower himself—hastened to explain that this was a victory of the "moderates" over the "orthodox."

For a moment, during the Russo-Finnish engagement, one heard a note of exaltation; were not the Russians being checked by the Finns? Was not the Red Army a parade of wooden soldiers? That illusion of the shaky, indeed primitive state of Soviet preparedness persisted right down to Stalingrad; then it disappeared; then it arose again. It has been buried by Sputnik.

What of the next forty years? Marx insisted that every society has within it the seeds of its own destruction. If this is valid, then it applies to Communism as well as to capitalism. Thus, Djilas insists that the longer the Communists rule the greater becomes the gap between the myth of proletarian rule and the reality of proletarian exploitation. Similarly, one might add, does the gap become greater between the myth of national auonomy and the reality of Russian imperialism. The time may be ripe for a new Marx who will write a treatise on the "contradictions of Communism."

But if Communism contains the seeds of its destruction, is not freedom's future assured?

It is a comforting thought, dangerously so, for the rulers of the Soviet Union have many weapons in their arsenal with which to discourage or disperse trouble-makers. I mean more than arms. "New possibilities of interfering with nature threaten us in many fields," wrote Werner Heisenberg, Director of the Max Planck Institute:

> In the field of biology, we have gained such insights into the process of heredity and the structure and chemistry of large albumen molecules that it has become a practical possibility even the biological development of man may be influenced in the direction of some predetermined selective breeding. The mental and spiritual state of people could be influenced and, if this were carried out from a scientific point of view, it could lead to terrible mental deformation of great masses of people. . . . Life and death of humanity at large can become dependent on the actions of a few, very small groups of people.

Then too, the USSR will continue to benefit from the persistent myth that the governing impulse of Communism is the end of human exploitation. Over the last four decades, the United States has enjoyed more freedom, higher economic standards, a far better life for its working people than the Soviet Union. Yet millions upon millions of people *believe* the contrary. Even the promise of a better *future* life is greater in the United States; but many argue the opposite.

SHALL we then accept the inevitability of doom, along with one of the writers for the *National Review* who said recently that "history [God help us] has never moved faster. And . . . time is altogether on the Communist side"?

That is not my conclusion. I would conclude on a much more tentative note, that of Ecclesiastes, who said that

> a wise man's heart discerneth time and judgment; because the misery of man is great upon him; for he knoweth not that which shall be; for who can tell him how it shall be?

And because we know not the end, the battle is not for the impatient or the despairing. "For," concludes Ecclesiastes, "There is no discharge in that war."

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BOOKS & COMMENT

Another Way of Looking at the Blackbird

by Irving Howe

What inmost allegiance, what ultimate religion, would be proper to a wholly free and disillusioned spirit?—George Santayana.

GRADUALLY, under the pressure of time, the masks of Wallace Stevens are wearing away, and not because they have become obsolete or been proven deceptive but because they now seem to have figured mainly as preparations for a homelier reality. Gaudy mystifier, Crispin's pilot, flaunter of rare chromatic words, explorer of Yucatan, enemy of the day's routine, afficionado of strange hats, even the gamesman of epistemology—these roles yield to Stevens' "basic slate," an American poet reflecting upon solitary lives in a lonely age and searching for that "inmost allegiance" by which men might live out their years in thousands of Hartfords.

Opus Posthumous, by Wallace Stevens, edited by Samuel French Morse (Knopf; $6.75).

Stevens was the kind of poet who wrote methodically and a good deal, apparently without waiting for, though always delighted to receive, the blessings of inspiration. Writing verse seems to have become for him a means of wresting convictions of selfhood: the visible token of that which he insistently wrote about. His work is therefore very much of a piece, both in its success and failures. In *Opus Posthumous*—a collection of fugitive pieces, poems omitted from the *Collected Poems,* a few verse plays, a group of aphorisms on poetry, some critical essays and 30 late poems devoted to preparation for death—one can trace out something of the scheme and direction of Stevens' work, perhaps even a bit more easily than in the *Collected Poems.* For *Opus Posthumous* is a much less imposing book, and one therefore in which Stevens' intention juts out all the more sharply.

After the publication of *Harmonium* in 1923, the main job of his critics was to become familiar with his decor: the exotic places, the tropical language, the cheerful jibing at bourgeois norms, the apparent *fin-de-siècle* estheticism, the flip nose-thumbing of his titles. So luxuriant did the world of his poems seem, so free of traditional moral demands, that his early admirers could hardly avoid thinking of this world as primarily a sensuous landscape. It was a view that lingered into Marianne Moore's description of Stevens as "a delicate apothecary of savors and precipitates"—though in that last word there is a hint that Miss Moore, as usual, saw more than she said.

While this was a way of reading Stevens that could yield genuine pleasures, it hardly went very far toward penetrating his deeper concerns, and even when confined to *Harmonium* it could be maintained only if one focused on the shorter poems and neglected "Sunday Morning" and "The Comedian as Letter C." In an early study of Stevens, R. P. Blackmur quickly saw that the strange cries, hoots and words that ran through the poems, far from being mere exotica, were oblique and humorous tokens of a profoundly serious effort to grapple with the distinctively "modern" in modern experience.

Later there was a tendency to read Stevens as if he were a versifying philosopher, a misfortune for which he was himself partly to blame, since at his prolific second-best he had a way of sounding like a versifying philosopher. Stevens' poetry, now in the hands of new exegetes, was said to be about the writing of poetry, and was regarded as a series of variations on the philosophical theme of the relation between reality and imagination. Both of these statements, while true and useful, were needlessly limiting as aids toward a fuller apprehension of the poetry: the first was too narrow, the second too academic, and from neither could one gain a sense of what might be urgent or particular in Stevens' work.

POETRY written mainly about the writing of poetry — could that be the ground for any large claim as to the interest Stevens might command from literate readers? Imagination and reality—did that not increase the peril of regarding Stevens as a shuffler of epistemological categories? Neither gambit is enough; another way is needed for looking at the blackbird: not the only or the best, but another.

As the base of Stevens' work, as a force barely acknowledged yet always felt, lies a pressing awareness of human disorder in our time—but an awareness radically different from that of most writers. Only rarely does it emerge in his poems as a dramatized instance or fiction; Stevens seldom tries and almost never manages to evoke the modern disorder through representations of moral conduct or social conflict. When in *Owl's Clover* he did write a poem with a relatively explicit politics, the result, as he later acknowledged, was unfortunate: rhetoric overrunning thought, an assault upon a subject which as a poet

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Stevens was not prepared to confront.

Lacking that "novelistic" gift for portraiture-in-depth which is so valuable to a good many modern poets, Stevens does not examine society closely or even notice it directly for any length of time; he simply absorbs "the idea" of it. A trained connoisseur in chaos, he sees no need to linger before the evidence: there is enough already. And that is why it seems neither a paradox nor a conceit to say that in Stevens' poetry the social world is but dimly apprehended while a perspective upon history is brilliantly maintained: history as it filters through his consciousness of living and writing at a given time. The disorder that occupies the foreground of so much modern literature is calmly accepted by Stevens, appearing in his work not as a dominant subject but as a pressure upon all subjects.

IN a somewhat similar way, Stevens, though sharply responsive to the crisis of belief which has troubled so many sensitive persons in the twentieth century, is not himself directly or deeply involved in it. He knows and feels it, but has begun to move beyond it. When he writes that . . .

> The death of Satan was a tragedy
> For the imagination. A capital
> Negation destroyed him in his tenement
> And, with him, many blue phenomena . . .

the force of these lines is clearly secular, releasing an attitude of comic humaneness. Perhaps they are also a little blasphemous, since it is hard to imagine a religious writer making quite this complaint about the consequences of the death of Satan. Here, as elsewhere in Stevens, a secular imagination measures the loss that it suffers from the exhaustion of religious myths and symbols, and then hopes that emotional equivalents can be found in . . .

> One's self and the mountains of one's land,
>
> Without shadows, without magnificence,
> The flesh, the bones, the dirt, the stone.

At times, it is true, Stevens can resemble the typical intellectual of his day (or the idea of the typical intellectual) and describes himself as "A most inappropriate man In a most unpropitious place." He can appear to regret that "The epic of disbelief Blares oftener and soon, will soon be constant." Yet if one compares him to Eliot and the later Auden, it becomes clear that Stevens is relatively free from religious or ideological nostalgia:

> The truth is that there comes a time
> When we can mourn no more over music
> That is so much motionless sound.
>
> There comes a time when the waltz
> Is no longer a mode of desire, a mode
> Of revealing desire and is empty of shadow.

ONLY occasionally does one find in Stevens that intense yearning for a real or imaginary past which has become so prevalent an attitude in our century. There is instead a recognition, both sensitive and stolid, of where we happen to be. And this, in Stevens' reckoning, imposes a new burden on the poet

> . . . since in the absence of a belief in God, the mind turns to its own creations and examines them, not alone from the esthetic point of view, but for what they reveal, for what they validate and invalidate, for the support they give.

Stevens is not, I think, directly affected by the usual religious or intellectual uncertainties, at least not nearly so much as by the predicament—and possibilities—of the mind experiencing them, the mind that still moves within the orbit of some waning belief yet strives for a direction and momentum of its own. Even in those poems, such as "Sunday Morning" and "The Comedian as Letter C," which do seem to deal explicitly with belief, one finds a recapitulation of a progress Stevens has already taken, not in freeing himself entirely from the crisis of belief or its emotional aftereffects (for to claim that would be impudent), but in learning to write as if in his poetic person he were a forerunner of post-crisis, post-ideological man. In "The Man With the Blue Guitar," where the guitar serves as the instrument of poetry, Stevens relates this role to an estimate, lovely in its comic modesty, of his own work:

> . . . Poetry
> Exceeding music must take the place
> Of empty heaven and its hymns,
> Ourselves in poetry must take their place,
> Even in the chatter of your guitar.

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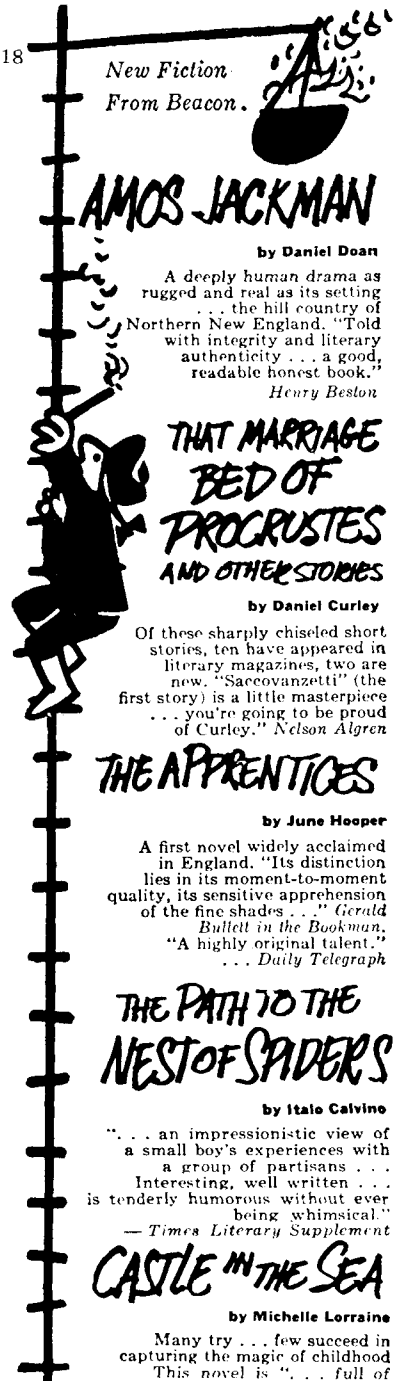

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Yet Stevens is too much of a realist, too aware (as in "The Comedian as Letter C") of the sheer inertia of human existence, to suppose that the crisis of belief can be quickly overcome either by private decision or by public commitment.

Accepting the condition of uncertainty and solitariness as unavoidable to man once he has freed himself from the gods, Stevens poses as his ultimate question not, what shall we do about the crisis of belief, but rather, how shall we live with and perhaps beyond it? And one reason for thinking of Stevens as a comic poet is that he makes this choice of questions.

How shall we live with and then perhaps beyond the crisis of belief?—it is to confront this question that Stevens keeps returning to the theme of reality and imagination. Not merely because he is interested in epistemological forays as such—though he is; nor because he is fascinated with the creative process—though that too; but because his main concern is with discovering and, through his poetry, *enacting* the possibilities for human self-renewal in an impersonal and recalcitrant age.

How recalcitrant that age can be, Stevens knew very well. The fragmentation of personality, the loss of the self in its social roles, the problem of discovering one's identity amid a din of public claims—all this, so obsessively rehearsed in modern literature, is the premise from which Stevens moves to poetry. When Stevens does write directly about such topics, it is often with lightness and humor, taking easily on a tangent what other writers can hardly bear to face. An early little poem, "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock," is about houses that are haunted by "white night-gowns," for Stevens the uniform of ordinariness and sober nights.

None are green,
Or purple with green rings,
Or green with yellow rings,
None of them are strange,
With socks of lace
And beaded ceintures.

In this flat world "People are not going/To dream of baboons and periwinkles." Only here and there an old sailor, one who by age and trade stands outside the perimeter of busy dullness . . .

Drunk and asleep in his boots,
Catches tigers
In red weather.

I hope it will not seem frivolous if I suggest that this drunken sailor embodies a central intention of Stevens' mind, and that when Stevens in his later poems turns to such formidable matters as inquiries into the nature of reality or the relation between the perceiving eye and the perceived object, he still keeps before him the figure of that old sailor dreaming in red weather.

The elaborate conceptual maneuvers of Stevens' longer poems have as their objective not any conclusion in the realm of thought but a revelation in the realm of experience. They are written to rediscover, and help us rediscover, the human gift for self-creation; they try to enlarge our margin of autonomy; they are incitements to intensifying our sense of what remains possible even today. Each nuance of perspective noted in a Stevens poem matters not merely in its own right, but as a comic prod to animation, a nudge to the man whose eye is almost dead. And in Stevens' poetry the eye is the central organ of consciousness.

When Stevens writes about the writing of poetry, he needs to be read not only on the level of explicit statement, but also as if the idea of poetry were a synecdoche for every creative potential of consciousness, as if poetry were that which can help liberate us from the tyranny of mechanical life and slow dying. In that sense, Stevens is a revolutionist of the imagination, neither exhorting nor needing to exhort but demonstrating through poetry the possibilities of consciousness. And he can do this, among other reasons, because in the background of his work loom the defeats and losses of the century.

Time and again Stevens turns to the clause, "It is as if . . .", for that clause charts a characteristic turning or soaring of his mind, which then is followed by another opening of perception. And these, in turn, are openings to the drama of the mind as it reaches out toward new modes of awareness and thereby "makes" its own life from moment to moment. There may be thirteen or three hundred and thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird, but what matters is that the eye, and the mind behind the eye, should encompass the life of

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these possible ways and the excitement of their variety. What also matters, as Mr. Richard Ellman has remarked, is that the mind behind the eye should remember that the blackbird, no matter how it may be seen, is always there in its mysterious tangibility.

Putting it this way I may seem to be making Stevens into a moralist of sorts: which readers awed by his urbanity of style might well take to be implausible. But in his relaxed and unhurried way Stevens is, I think, a moralist—a moralist of seeing.

LIKE any other convention, Stevens' utilization of the theme of reality and imagination as a means of reaching to his deeper concerns, can slide into formula and habit. His extraordinary gifts as a stylist aggravate rather than lessen this danger, since they allow him to keep spinning radiant phrases long after his mind has stopped moving. The reader accustomed to Stevens' habits and devices may even respond *too* well to the poems, for their characteristic inflections and themes have a way of setting off emotions which are proper to Stevens' work as a whole but have not been earned by the particular poem. At other times Stevens' insistence upon human possibility can itself become mechanical, a ruthlessness in the demand for joy. And perhaps the greatest weakness in his poems is a failure to extend the possibilities of self-renewal beyond solitariness or solitary engagements with the natural world and into the life of men living together. (Yet Stevens, humorous with self-knowledge, wrote some of his most poignant lines about this very limitation: "I cannot bring a world quite round, Although I patch it as I can. I sing a hero's head, large eye And bearded bronze, but not a man, Although I patch him as I can And reach through him almost to man.")

At his best, however, Stevens transforms each variant of perception into a validation of the self. Sometimes the self is to achieve renewal by a sympathetic merger with the outer world:

> One must have a mind of winter
> To regard the frost and the boughs
> Of the pine trees crusted with snow . . .

At other times the self gains a kind of assurance from entire withdrawal, as if to grant the outer world its own being. In "Nuance on a Theme by Williams," Stevens quotes William Carlos Williams' lines, "It's a strange courage/ you give me, ancient star" and then proceeds to tell the star:

> Lend no part to any humanity that suffuses
> You in its own light.
> Be no chimera of morning.
> Half-man, half-star.

The act of discovery by which sentience is regained can

> Be the finding of a satisfaction, and may
> Be of a man skating, a woman dancing, a woman
> Combing. The poem of the act of the mind.

It may be a sheer pleasure in the freshness of the physical world:

> How should you walk in that space and know
> Nothing of the madness of space,
>
> Nothing of its jocular procreations?
> Throw the lights away. Nothing must stand
>
> Between you and the shapes you take
> When the crust of shape has been destroyed.

In the "Idea of Order at Key West" the self "takes over" the outer world by endowing it with a perceptual form:

> She was the single artificer of the world
> In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,
> Whatever self it had, became the self
> That was her song, for she was the maker . . .

In "Three Travellers Watch a Sunrise," a play printed in *Opus Posthumous*, one of the voices says:

> Sunrise is multiplied
> Like the earth on which it shines,
> By the eyes that open on it,
> Even dead eyes,
> As red is multiplied by the leaves of trees.

AND finally in Stevens' last poems, which form the glory of *Opus Posthumous*, the cleared mind listens for solitary sounds in winter, waiting patiently for death. These astonishing poems, like Chinese paintings in their profound simplicity and rightness, are Stevens' last probings, the last quiet efforts to realize life through connecting with whatever is not human. The idea of the world, now as lucid as its single sounds, becomes the final objection of contemplation:

> The palm at the end of the mind,
> Beyond the last thought, rises
> In the bronze distance,
> A gold-feathered bird
> Sings in the palm, without any human meaning,
> Without human feeling, a foreign song.

Reading these last poems one encounters again the theme of discovery, the desire to transform and renew, that has given shape to all of Stevens' work. Here, if anywhere, is the answer to Santayana's question, the "ultimate religion" of our secular comedy:

> The honey of heaven may or may not come,
> But that of earth both comes and goes at once.

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THEATRE

Waiting For Saroyan

WILLIAM SAROYAN has been absent from Broadway for 14 years. To me, at least, they have been 14 years of peace and prosperity with hardly anything "cute" being said or done on the stage. But now, concurrent with the drastic decline of the stock market, Mr. Saroyan has reappeared, to a salvo of rave notices, at the little, six hundred passenger Bijou Theatre, with a two-act comedy called *The Cave Dwellers,* which leans heavily upon *Waiting for Godot* and crushingly upon the theatre-going public's seemingly boundless sentimentality.

The Cave Dwellers is peopled by more Saroyan people than one would have thought possible. There are fey people, sad people, beautiful people, little people, lost people, brave people and absolutely *no* bad people. In fact, all people are, according to one of the characters, "angels who dwell in human bodies." Also present are such Saroyanesque fixtures as a performing bear, a mute milkman, a yo-yo and that standard stage bundle of rags hastily wrapped in a blanket and called a baby.

The Cave Dwellers, by William Saroyan (Bijou).

THE story is roughly this: On the stage of a cold, deserted theatre — and a theatre that is about to be torn down in a lower East Side slum clearance project—dwell three lost, old people patiently waiting to die. They are The Queen, a fallen star, played with great verve by Eugenie Leontovich; The King, who was once a great clown, performed floridly by Barry Jones; and The Duke, a broken down prize fighter, done with beautiful sincerity and simplicity by Wayne Morris. Into their impoverished little derelict world come a lonely, lost girl; a destitute young couple who own a performing bear and who have a baby the instant they arrive; a mute young milkman from whom The Duke has been obliged to steal milk in order to feed the baby and its mother; and eventually the boss of the wrecking crew who takes pity on them and allows them a few days' grace before their world is demolished in the name of progress.

Knowing my Saroyan pretty well, I keep trying not to ask myself such questions as "With his wife in labor, why would a young husband take her (*and* a performing bear) through a blizzard to a derelict theatre instead of picking a nice warm hospital where more capable people might be on hand to attend the acouchment?" Or, if the time is the present, as Mr. Saroyan says it is, I wonder why it is that a beggar can get no coins per working day at a period when panhandling is fairly lucrative or why it is that just a couple of the characters can't find jobs. I try to fight down these mundane questions but it's a losing battle. And while these nagging little queries simply display my own mean nature, they also fire a bullet right through the big, beating heart of William Saroyan.

Happily, there are some very pleasant things to report about *The Cave Dwellers.* The performers are uniformly superb. Barry Jones, while a bit too rich for my blood, brings warmth and color and pathos to the fairly standardized role of the sad old clown. Eugenie Leontovich, as always, lends magic and majesty to the discarded actress.

Two refugees from Hollywood do impressive work. Wayne Morris proves that, once free of the virile-young-man parts imposed on him by the film studios, he is capable of a brilliant and moving performance. In fact, I found Mr. Morris' work the most noteworthy, possibly because his role is the least flamboyantly written. And Susan Harrison, whose screen debut in *The Sweet Smell of Success* did not shatter me, is lovely and affecting as the lost young girl.

John Alderman, whose mute milkman depends solely upon pantomime, performs with both thought and restraint. While I was less taken with Gerald Hiken and Vergel Cook as the owners of a newborn son and a trained bear, they read their slightly mortifying lines with more authority and less embarrassment than anyone had a right to expect. The director, Carmen Capalbo, is also to be commended for leading his little band of players through the mawkish morass of Saroyan silliness with no fatalities. Bernardo Segall has also contributed some incidental music that is haunting, catchy and wonderfully orchestrated for a modest group of four instruments.

ONE wonders how lesser talents might have fared at the hands of Mr. Saroyan. There are speeches as confusing as: "A man is a father. I'm not a father. When I was a father my children were never born." I guess I get it, but is it worth the trouble? There are speeches—this one explains how to bear a son of one's own—as distressing as: "Get with a man to get a man of your own." The actors are forced to call one another Man, Woman, Girl, Child, Mother and Father, as well as King, Queen and Duke. And the word Love pops up—often in triplets—at least a thousand times during the course of a seemingly long evening. It's love, love, love till you're sick, sick, sick. At least that's the way *The Cave Dwellers*—outstanding as its performers were—affected me.

But, as with all of William Saroyan's writing, your reactions will depend entirely on your feelings for the author's work. If you *don't* love, love, love Saroyan, stay home, home, home.

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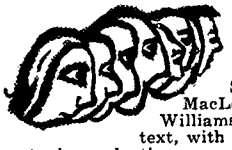

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Saroyan On Himself

I REACHED New York for the first time in August of 1928, but in those days, at the age of 20, I was not a hotel man. I took furnished rooms all over town from August to January, and then went back to San Francisco, still nowhere as the writer I knew I was.

I didn't return to New York until early in 1935, a few months after my first book had been published. The first hotel I stopped at was The New Yorker, but I was there only a few days, as the place was not for me. In looking for a place that was, I came at length to the Great Northern on West 57th Street, and while the rent was what I considered high, $12 a week, I took a room.

After that whenever I went to New York I stopped at the Great Northern.

In May of 1939 it was at the Great Northern that I wrote *The Time of Your Life*.

The following year, however, I began to stop at the Hampshire House on Central Park South, both because I could afford to, and because I enjoyed the extra-fancy setting, and the view of the Park, green or white according to the season. Over the years, now and then I stopped at a number of other hotels, too, mainly by way of finding out about them: the Plaza, the Pierre, the St. Regis, and so on.

On December 20th of 1954 when I got into a taxi at Grand Central I asked the driver to take me to the Pierre, but on our way I told him to make it the Great Northern.

I believed I had two reasons for going back to that hotel after fifteen years: first, the rent was low; second, the offices of the City Center Theatre were across the 56th Street entrance to the hotel, and as the Center was about to revive *The Time of Your Life*.

There was a third reason I wasn't aware of at the time, however. If anything, this reason was more important than the other two: I wanted to see if I might be impelled by being at the Great Northern to write a new play.

I *was* so impelled, and on Saturday, January 1st, 1955, I began to write the play, which for three hours was called *The End*, but after that was called *The Cave Dwellers*, as it will be forever.

Literary history, like any other kind, is supposed to repeat itself, but actually of course it never does.

The Time of Your Life was written at the Great Northern Hotel in six days, *The Cave Dwellers* in eight. There, already, is a small instance of the failure of history to repeat itself. The Great Northern itself in 1939 had been at least a little less old than it had become in 1955, and so had I. Furthermore, the Tax Collector in 1939 hadn't yet decided that the reason the Government was always so sorely pressed for money was that I was spending too much for fun.

Still furthermore, while I was writing *The Time of Your Life* in 1939 I knew that if the producer of my first play, Harold Clurman, didn't want it (he didn't), Eddie Dowling did, sight unseen, and that it would go into immediate production; whereas, while I was writing *The Cave Dwellers* in 1955 I believed that the play would not be produced for many years.

The next time I am in New York I shall not stop at the Great Northern, not because I can afford a better hotel, but because I've been there before.

But if there happens to be a playwright somewhere who is ready to write a play and is poor and hasn't yet met the Tax Collector, I can recommend that he stop at the Great Northern and write the play there.

The rent, while higher than it used to be, is still lower than the rent at other hotels, the atmosphere is decently real (that is, old but still trying to keep up appearances), the location is excellent, the Automat is just next door, Carnegie Hall is just up the street (but it isn't for visiting, it's only for walking past), the art galleries are all along 57th, Central Park is just a block and a half away. And as he does his work, the playwright can bear in mind that the writing of plays is not unprecedented in that place: the desk, the telephone operators, and the bell boys will all be unobtrusive, and the engineer will be glad to fetch a work table.

WILLIAM SAROYAN

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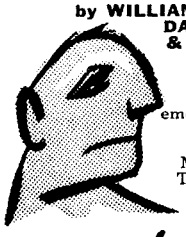

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A Communication

(Continued from page 3)

and executive policies is possible. The vigor and the manly beauty of Mr. Black's writing don't need my commendation. And the essential validity and moral authority of his thesis can gain nothing from my approval. But I am provoked to raise one or two points which may tend toward qualification of the thesis.

Mr. Black's conclusion is that a policy of judicial and executive firmness is morally justified and is shown to be wise when considerations of expediency ("If perfectly free, legally and morally, to choose the most efficacious means for attaining desegregation . . . ") are canvassed. But Mr. Black argues only for a *"high degree"* of judicial firmness, resolutely supported by the executive; that is, he argues for the "deliberate speed" formula applied in good faith. He would not neglect *suaviter in modo*. And yet the moral and prudential considerations that Mr. Black marshals as warranting firmness would carry one all the way, past the mere "high degree," past "deliberate speed," all the way to immediate compliance, having no regard for *suaviter in modo*.

This hiatus between the conclusion to which Mr. Black's analysis leads him and the general recommendation that he offers us is to my mind accounted for by a failure to give due weight to one important factor. (This failure may in turn be accounted for by the undoubted fact that nobody, but nobody has ever been able to say everything there is to be said on a subject in a single book, let alone a single article; or it may be that we reach here a real difference of opinion, and that Mr. Black accepts "deliberate speed" because the Court has decreed it, but would wish for an order of immediate compliance if he could have it.)

The employment of vigorous, firm and prompt means to enforce school integration is morally justified, Mr. Black argues, because our law is normally enforced in this fashion. No doubt it is true that we do not customarily grant a man who has been in the habit of raising checks time to adjust to new ways and obey with deliberate speed a statute outlawing such activities. We tell him, on the contrary, as Mr. Black says, "Do it and you go to jail." And for him that—the prospect of jail—is all the law means or need mean; the law, it has been remarked, is what is at the end of a policeman's stick. But the conception of the law implicit in this train of thought—law washed in the "cynical acid," as Holmes said, and seen from the badman's point of view—is all too incomplete. It regards as an accomplished fact something that can be understood only as a process and that, when it is so understood, takes on a different aspect even as brought to bear on the badman.

With us law, in its origins, is consensus, not fiat. One comes nearer to comprehensive truth by saying that the law is consent and accommodation to reason, decency and tradition than by referring to a nightstick. The task of the lawgiver—whether he be a legislator or a judge—is to find the consensus, seek the consent and accomplish the accommodation. The task in all its parts is a creative one. Consensus may not be apparent at the first level of consciousness; but it may exist just the same. Nor is the search over or futile if consensus at any level is lacking in a moment of exacerbated conflict.

The traditions of our people and of our institutions may point clearly to the area in which a common understanding will reveal itself when the turbulence of the hour is past. And consent for the time being may be drawn from the vast reservoir of approval of the lawgiver's function, if not of the particular law. This is what is meant by respect for law, to which Mr. Black refers, and which, as he says, prevails in the South as well as elsewhere. It prevails because our law has not been fiat, and because in the rare instances when the law is an expression of confidence that the consensus of the past will endure in the future even though it seems not to exist in the present, or when it summons into action our aspirations, albeit they conflict with our practice—in those instances the law makes allowance for the difficulties of accommodation.

I feel the embarrassment natural to one trained in the common law at having dealt in the large generalities that fill the preceding paragraph. And so I shall hasten to show that they have a direct

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bearing on the point in issue. The ruling that the Constitution forbids the States to segregate the races in their public schools expresses beyond a doubt the *consensus of the Nation. But just as* plainly it runs counter to the views, the emotions and the settled expectations of a majority of the people to whose way of life it is chiefly applicable; that is to say, most Southern whites. The analogy to criminal statutes and the like thus fails. Those measures are generally based on almost universal acceptance, and need to be enforced only against an infinitesimal minority, which consists of the irreducible number of the anti-social. When criminal statutes are not so based, they are ineffective. That is the case with anti-gambling statutes, sex and prohibition laws. (Incidentally, this I think is what is meant by the phrase Mr. Black questions: "You oughtn't to try to enforce morality by law." That is to say you *can't* enforce it, if it is merely your own particular, not the generally accepted, morality.)

IT FOLLOWS that in achieving integration the task of the law is not to punish the badman but to diminish his number. For we meet here the resistance not of a fringe of misfits, but of a populace. In such circumstances it is not the usual thing in our society to force *immediate* compliance. Nor is it the prudent thing. The object rather is to foster consent.

Mr. Black lists the materials out of which consent can be molded. They are: The Southern white's religious or quasi-religious feelings and aspirations, which are buried beneath layers of contrary *practice and tradition; respect for the* law and its processes; and the desire for peace and business as usual. To be sure, a degree of firmness is needed in working effectively with these materials. We are trying, as it were, to break a man of a bad habit, and trying to make him feel that he wants to be rid of it, as deep down somewhere he does. And so we must create a sense of inevitability about the eventual complete break.

Resistance must be accompanied by a sense of futility. That does not mean that we must crack down directly any sign of resistance appears. The patient must learn for himself that it is futile, and men learn by doing. What is necessary is that we never retreat. One other thing is of prime importance, however. We must—to carry the figure forward one moment longer—minimize the patient's resentment of us, else we lose all benefit of his deep-seated, subconscious desire to acquiesce. Nothing, as Mr. Black recognizes, would call forth a more just or vigorous resentment in the South than for the rest of the country, with its own not unblemished record, to strike an attitude of self-righteousness. And of course such an attitude would be implicit in a demand for immediate compliance.

Two more points: First, the South's resources of respect for the law will not be called forth if the law in this instance has the appearance of fiat. For as I have noted, that is not the context in which the tradition of respect for law has grown up in our society. The law must be and seem, in some measure at least, responsive to the immediate wishes of those to whom its command is directed. Second, enforcement crises do not foster the sense of the ultimate inevitability of integration, which must be driven home to take advantage both of religious feelings and aspirations and of the desire for peace and business as usual. In our society, with its habits of compliance and the basis on which, as I have tried to show, these habits rest, when the law summons force to its aid it demonstrates not its strength and stability, but its weakness and impermanence. For—again—the law is not what is at the end of the nightstick, but what our people accept.

The upshot is that the deliberate speed formula by which the judiciary is feeling its way toward implementation of school integration was the only possible one. And it remains so. An intelligent and alert executive has it within his power to hasten and ease success by himself working with the raw materials of consent in the South, which Mr. Black has so eloquently and authoritatively described. Such an executive could have avoided the disastrous Littlte Rock crisis.

ALEXANDER M. BICKEL

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